

as the birds flew across the road and settled again, we got excellent views of their slim grey bodies, scraggy blackcrested heads, orange-red bills and legs, and slightly forked tails—a flock of Black Bulbuls (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis ganeesa* Sykes)!

According to the books, the northernmost record is from Matheran. H.A. tells me that one was seen by Sálím Ali at Bhimashankar (on the main axis of the Sahyadri Range) on 8th September 1948, when they had visited

the place together. He also noted a small party in a forest beat on the Pen-Khopoli road (east of Karnala) on 26th December 1965. Nesting records from Khandala by McCann and Navarro have been published (1945) (JBNHS 45:241) and it is common at Mahableshwar.

The present record extends the accepted range of the species northwards by approximately 90 km.

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND—INDIA,
SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY 400 023,
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9. COURTSHIP SONG AND DISPLAY OF THE WHITETHROATED GROUND THRUSH *ZOOTHERA CITRINA CYANOTUS* (JARDINE & SELBY)

During the non-breeding months the White-throated Ground Thrush is quite frequently seen rummaging among the litter of the forest-floor, not much concerned about the presence of the birdwatcher. But a distinct change of mood occurs as the breeding season approaches. A bird may sometimes be seen singing from a bare high perch, but most often they become extremely shy and difficult to spot though the presence of numerous individuals evident from the rich lovely song which is a characteristic sound of a morning in April and May in the evergreen jungles of Mahableshwar, where most of my observations have been made. In high leafy or moss-covered branches of jambul the bird's chestnut and slate-blue coloration camouflages it surprisingly well. The voice has a ventriloquial quality

which makes accurate location difficult, and the cautiously approaching birdwatcher usually sees the exasperatingly elusive and audience-shy songster only when it flies from its perch for a more private location to resume its serenade.

Singing from such well-concealed positions the male sometimes assumes its peculiar courtship display—probably the reason why the display is so seldom observed. I have been lucky enough to see it on a few occasions, invariably when the female was somewhere near. I give a composite description from the notes sent by me to Dr. Sálím Ali on these occasions.

The normally spruce upright-perching bird bows forward with wings drooping limply. The neck is stretched far forward horizontally

giving the bird a hunch-backed appearance and the head and beak point vertically down at right-angles to the horizontally stretched out neck. Seen from the rear the rufous on the sides of the bird is visible from behind the drooping wings as two small but conspicuous patches against the slaty grey back, slightly above each axilla. The overall effect in terms of human mime is a ludicrous abjectly humble shame-faced hanging head stance. The bird continues to sing during the display but the drollery is heightened when occasionally its full throated notes change to high-pitched scarcely audible pipings as if the serenader *was being choked by overpowering emotion*.

I first saw the display about 25 years ago one May morning at Matheran on the road between Coronation and Porcupine points. The bird was singing in a high crotch of a large tree—was very much puzzled when the bird suddenly went into the drooping wing pose. But when I saw the female fly in a couple of seconds later and settle near by, I realized that this was a courtship display by the male directed at her.

The next observation was made with Dr. Sálím Ali at Mahableshwar in April 1974. On a high jambul tree in a nallah between Jeejee Lodge and Dhun Villa what appeared

to be a discoloured leaf was spotted by Dr. Sálím Ali as the male thrush in drooping pose. On 20.v.1976 I recorded another observation at Mahableshwar about 200 yards away from the foregoing location, again on a high jambul at the head of the path leading down to the nallah. The bird had been singing continuously for 10 minutes, before being spotted. The female about 25 ft up on a large horizontal branch appeared quite indifferent and was swallowing something small. The well-camouflaged displaying male was perched about 7 ft away and slightly higher in a thin leafy branch.

During the last observation (May 1977) at Mahableshwar on Dan to Beersheba path below Mt. Ferohin, I had an unusually clear and prolonged view of a singing and occasionally posing bird fairly low on a jambul branch. The pose varied from a scarcely noticeable droop to full intensity of contortion. The song also changed to the high pitched wheezing described previously, when the display was at its intensest. Possibly the change in pose and song varied according to the proximity of the female which unfortunately I could not spot in thick foliage till it flew away, the male first and the female following, when another thrush started singing about 30 yards away.

4-A, RASHMI,
CARMICHAEL ROAD,
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[Some more details of this bizarre display will be found on p. 88, Vol. 9, HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, under the orange-headed (nominate) subspecies. That

observation, however, was also made in Mahableshwar and should correctly refer to the Whitethroated Ground Thrush.—Eds.].